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TRUE

PLEASURE, CHEARFULNESS,

AND

HAPPINESS,

The immediate CONSEQUENCE of

RELIGION

Fully and concisely proved.

With some REMARKS on the

THEATRE.

ADDRESSED to a YOUNG LADY in *Pennsylvania.*

Only add
Deeds to thy Knowledge answerable, add Faith,
Add Virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
By name to come call'd Charity, the Soul
Of all the rest.

MILTON's Paradise Lost.

PHILADELPHIA:
Printed by WILLIAM and THOMAS BRADFORD,
at the *London Coffee-House.* M.DCC.LXVII.

PREFACE.

To the READER,

THE author of this Epiſtle will by no means give the leaſt hint who the Lady is to whom it is addreſſed; he only hopes, that by reading it, ſhe will caſt away thoſe prejudices ſhe ſays ſhe has entertained againſt a Gentleman, merely becauſe he will not debar himſelf of thoſe innocent amuſements, which the author endeavours to prove highly compatible with a life of Virtue. It is publiſhed as a mite towards the expulſion of bigotry, ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm, in general, without deſcending to particulars.

A

LETTER, &c.

MADAM,

THE free ſentiments you expreſſed in a certain company ſome few nights paſt, concerning a gentleman, who muſt be a perfect ſtranger to you, ſince he has been but two months upon the continent, and you never off it-----occaſions this Letter, which is honeſtly meant as an endeavour to clear your underſtanding from a miſt of bigotry, which ſeems at preſent to overſhadow it.

THE Gentleman is a Clergyman; and your exceptions againſt him are, "that "he frequents Plays,"-------ſo far from concealing his defects, I will aſſure you, that he alſo attends every place of public amuſement, and above all other entertainments, delights in dancing.

You ſay, you are ſo much prejudiced againſt him for the former only, as to be reſolved never to go and hear him preach: the further intelligence I have juſt given you will clench the nail, and I ſuppoſe you will now even fly his company.

To be ingenuous with you, Madam, as I am perfectly acquainted with the Gentleman, he never deſires to be in company but with harmleſs inoffenſive people, who ſcorn to mention the follies or even the vices of others ;-----knowing that each individual has weeds ſufficient in his garden to induce him to clear and cultivate his own, rather than officiouſly intrude his hoe within the bounds of others. As to preaching-------he would deſire an audience of the moderate kind, and would avoid enthuſiaſts----- bigots----- and madmen of all ſects, parties, Religions, and denominations whatſoever.

If you will not, therefore, liſten to *his* doctrine, be ſo kind as to indulge *me* a little with your leiſure------; and while I preach, I not only hope that you may profit, but that all may do ſo equally, who peruſe this Free-will-offering to Religion, Reaſon, Humanity and Common Senſe.

THE Trinity in Unity-----, Three Perſons ------in one Term----GOD, rules this ſublunary world, and all the univerſe : to this world I confine my diſcourſe-----He governs, rules, and directs it.

WE the inhabitants having juſtly incurr'd the ſevereſt rigour of his vengeance, are thro' his goodneſs reconciled to him again ------ ; and have an eaſy and perfect path chalk'd out for us, to reach and enjoy the inexpreſſible happineſs of his preſence for all eternity.

THIS path lies in the Goſpel,-----it is the Goſpel.

TELL me, have you read and duly conſidered theſe ineſtimable tidings of Joy, Peace and Harmony-----? Well, what do they enforce ?

AFTER a full conſent----to the moſt ſolid truths, the Goſpel fundamentally enjoins, with the greateſt energy, as a requiſite to Salvation, as the garb of Chirſtianity------- CHARITY.

THIS is the wedding garment of a diſciple of our SAVIOUR'S------: pray, Madam,

dam, have you ever had it on? Did it not mightily become you? Alas, Madam, why was it caſt off the other night! Had you but kept it on------ (and truſt me the fabled girdle of Venus gives not half ſo many charms) your bright eyes would never have encountered this.

Did the Apple, which regaled Eve's palate, entail a curſe upon its neighbour, that like the wheel of Ixion it ſhould be doomed never to lie ſtill------; or are women branded with a falſe, careleſs, and malicious cenſure? It becomes you, Madam, by your particular behaviour for the future to prove the laſt-----; you are indeed but an individual-----but individuals compoſe a multitude.

In the mean time, reflect upon what follows.

I have only juſt mentioned the general Creed of Chriſtians-----that Man fell by his own fault-----, was ſaved by his Redeemer's merit, and that the Goſpel is the infallible guide to Salvation.

It is likewiſe my firm belief, after a ſerious

ſerious and a ſolid examination, that the Church of *England* underſtands, comprehends, and explains this Goſpel in the pureſt and moſt apoſtolic manner.

She likewiſe is manifeſtly adorned, with the neceſſary-----beautiful, and becoming wedding-garment----- which is CHARITY; ------ this is her grand characteriſtic-----, and from hence ſprings that toleration ſhe univerſally extends to all Religions.

Nevertheleſs ſhe would rejoice, if all mankind was to embrace her tenets------ but as they are free agents-----ſhe knows that nothing but what is voluntary can be acceptable.

" Ye know not what doctrine ye are " of," ſaid our Saviour to his Diſciples, who, in a wild enthuſiaſtic zeal, demanded him to call down fire upon the heads of thoſe they eſteemed his enemies. They at laſt came to a better way of thinking ----, one more conformable to the maxims of their Lord, who, if he had judged force neceſſary, might by one miracle, have convinced all mankind of his Divinity, and revealed himſelf to their hearts

by

by rendering it impoſſible for them to think otherwiſe.

In ſhort, he might have done any thing he thought proper, but it behoves us to attend to what he HAS done, and not what he MIGHT have done.

For that would entirely have deſtroyed our Free-Agency--- and indeed the preſent ſtate of approbation in which mankind are placed ;---- he might as well have brought us all to Heaven at once----- : but it ſuffices that we have a clear teſtimony of his divine miſſion faithfully handed down to us, and by acting conformable to his doctrine, will have ſome degree of merit annexed to our poor performances, when the chearing voice of " well done thou good and " faitful ſervant" ſhall raviſh and delight our ears with never-ceaſing exſtacy.

You will excuſe me, Madam, if I tranſcribe out of the illuſtrious Milton a few lines upon this ſubject-----: their elegance will be their apology.

He introduces an Angel ſpeaking to our general Anceſtor----

-----" *That*

---" *That thou art happy, owe to God----;*
" *That thou continu'ſt ſuch----, owe to thyſelf,*
" *That is to thy obedience; therein ſtand.-----*
------" *Good he made thee, but to perſevere*
" *He left it in thy power-----; ordain'd thy will*
" *By nature free, not over-rul'd by fate*
" *Inextricable, or ſtrict neceſſity:*
" *Our voluntary ſervice he requires,*
" *Not our neceſſitated; ſuch with him*
" *Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how*
" *Can hearts, not free, be try'd whether they ſerve*
" *Willing or no, who* will *but what they* muſt
" *By* deſtiny, *and can no other chuſe?*
" *Myſelf, and all th' angelic hoſt, that ſtand*
" *In ſight of God enthron'd, our happy ſtate*
" *Hold as you yours, while our obedience holds;*
" *On other ſurety none: freely we ſerve*
" *Becauſe we freely love-----as in our will*
" *To love or not; in this we ſtand or fall.*"

THOUGH this, Madam, was addreſſed to Adam in his ſtate of innocence, yet it equally regards his poſterity, who are reconciled to God through their Redeemer, being faithfully aſſured that obedience to his commands, thro' his goodneſs will bring them to that Heaven which was forfeited by their forefather's tranſgreſſion.

I COME at laſt to the point------ ; I come to conſider the Chriſtian as he is now in this tranſitory life journeying to the new ---- to the heavenly Jeruſalem---- ; that Jeruſalem of which he is now a member, and only ſeparated from the angels and the ſouls of juſt men made perfect, by a veil of fleſh.

MANY are called but few are choſen---- ; I muſt therefore when I ſay a Chriſtian, be underſtood to mean *one* who with both his hands, and all his heart embraces and holds faſt the amiable doctrine he profeſſes : Charity comprehends all as ſuch whoſe lives are not notorious evidences againſt them.

IT is impoſſible for ſuch a Chriſtian to be gloomy, melancholy, or diſcontented : ------on the contrary he muſt of conſequence be chearful.

HE whoſe heart, after a thorough examination, aſſures him he has GOD for his friend, he alone is capable of enjoying, in the higheſt degree, the good things his Providence has beſtowed upon us here.

HE

He enjoys them, but cannot over-value them, becauſe he is ever ready to reſign them.

Narrow notions and illiberal principles are diſhonourable to the noble and exalted Religion of a Chriſtian------ : Our Saviour always diſcouraged and contemned them.

His ſentiments concerning *David* when he eat the ſhew-bread------ : His defence of his diſciples when they pluck'd the ears of corn upon the Sabbath------ ; the cures he performed upon that day in oppoſition to the opinion of the Phariſees----- ; his diſcourſe concerning the ox that fell into the ditch------- ; his determination that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath-----, and finally his whole life and actions ſufficiently prove that his way of thinking was adequate to his rank as the Son of the living God.

Following Christ his head, and his pattern, the Chriſtian cannot be deceived: He makes it his firſt and grand concern to attain thro' the merits of his Saviour, a bleſſed and a glorious immor-

 tality ;

tality------ ; always having his laſt ſtate preſent to his eye------, he in the mean time chearfully enjoys, what, according to promiſe is in conſequence of that, added unto him ; as our Heavenly Father knoweth we have need of theſe things to aſſiſt and comfort us in the dreary path of life.

DANCING is, undoubtedly, an innocent amuſement------- ; ye blooming virgins, emblems of purity, if it is not, how can ye repair to an aſſembly ! where ye are, a Clergyman, ſurely may truſt himſelf with ſafety.-----It is an innocent amuſement, and he blaſphemes, who preſumes to ſay that GOD himſelf does not delight to ſee his creatures happy.

THE firſt miracle that ever was performed by CHRIST, was upon a marriage feaſt----- : Jollity and joy, we know ever preſide in thoſe feſtivals---- ; and he who condeſcended to work a miracle upon ſuch an occaſion, cannot be juſtly imagined to have been a gloomy, melancholy ſpectator only, of ſuch joy and happineſs.

As to PLAYS, againſt which, Madam, you have taken your chief exceptions,

they

they are permitted exhibitions amongſt every ſociety of Chriſtians. The Roman Catholics of *Paris*, the Calviniſts of the *Hague*, the Lutherans in *Germany*, the Kirk of *Scotland*, and the Church of *England*, are proofs of the authenticity and veracity of my aſſertion. Our places of education almoſt univerſally perform them ------; and three times a year, the grand ſchool of *Weſtminſter*, which has afforded the moſt politic ſtateſmen, the firmeſt patriots and the worthieſt eccleſiaſtics, for theſe many centuries-----; encourages her ſons to appear before an audience of the Nobility of *Great-Britain* and the Ambaſſadors of foreign nations, in the Characters of *Terence*.-----I am aſhamed to combat ſuperſtition ;----but when I reflect how it dwells in ſo fair a breaſt, I will endeavour to exorciſe the dæmon. Muſt Shakeſpear, the immortal Shakeſpear be deſtroyed-----, ſhall Moliere be burnt------; ſhall Plautus, Terence, Euripides, ſhall many famous antients and deſerving moderns be involved in the horrid conflagration ; and poſterity and our cotempories reſtrained from endeavouring to ſhine in this amuſing------ this edifying manner? edifying! ay edifying-----: for vice and folly have never received

ceived ſeverer laſhes than thoſe that have been liberally inflicted on them by dramatic writers.

If then their writings, delight, inſtruct, amuſe and improve; as undeniably they do;----they may undoubtedly be exhibited upon the Stage. *Veluti in ſpeculum*, is the motto of the Theatre, and that in plain engliſh is no more or leſs, Madam, than that every fool, coxcomb, and villain, may ſee himſelf repreſented upon the ſtage as clearly as in a mirrour, the ſcorn, the contempt and horror, of an impartial audience: while virtue and innocence, either triumph in the applauſe of the honeſt ---- candid---- and humane,---- or ſink into the grave with the dignity becoming boldneſs and reſignation of a heart at peace with God and Man; ſubmitting to his Providence with heroic fortitude, and inculcating it upon our minds, that to die or live is the ſelf ſame thing, as in both ſituations we are alike under the protection of our God, our Creator, and our King.

Great then are the benefits the Theatre is capacitated to afford us; and it is accordingly entitled to our applauſe------to

our

our ſupport;----the effect---the genuine conſequence of its merit.

THERE is little danger it ſhould ever ſo far forget the grandeur of its inſtitution, as to degrade itſelf by rendering the fan neceſſary to modeſty. If it ſhould, I have too good an opinion of the bulk of my fellow-creatures, to ſuſpect, that ever an audience ſhould convene, ſo profligate, and abandoned, as to ſuffer ſuch repreſentations without branding them with the ſevereſt ignominy, the indelible marks of their diſpleaſure----; if otherwiſe,---- the audience are more to blame than the performers, and, indeed, the ſcandal is due, ſimply to their corruption.

As there is ſomething, inexpreſſibly awful in virtue-----, vice----- even vice, bluſhes to appear in its dreaded preſence ------; ſo in Paradiſe Loſt, we read how the Devil himſelf, the origin of impudence, as well as wickedneſs, was aſhamed before it.-------

" *So ſpake the Cherub; and his grave rebuke,*
" *Severe in youthful beauty, added grace*
" *Invincible: a baſh'd the Devil ſtood,*

" *And*

" *And felt how awful goodneſs is, and ſaw*
" *Virtue, in her ſhape how lovely: ſat and pin'd*
" *His loſs*"------.

I ſet it down, therefore, as ſelf evident, that a virtuous audience will always regulate, and influence the Stage.

AMONGST that virtuous audience, a Clergyman may certainly appear-------; they may,----they do----in every country where ignorance, ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, do not cloud, diſtract, and inflame the minds of the bigoted inhabitants; for it is abſurd to imagine that the Clergy may not lawfully entertain themſelves with any amuſement, which they lawfully allow a candidate for Heaven.

MADAM, a cool head is neceſſary for thoſe who tranſact real buſineſs---; the important concerns of another life demand this in an eſpecial manner; let the heart be warm,----let it be animated with a meritorious zeal----; let it wiſely endeavour to make, keep and eſteem GOD it's friend -----; rely upon him as its Creator------; gratefully adore him as an affectionate Redeemer----; and meekly repoſe confidence in him, as the Judge----the final Arbitrator

bitrator of it's fate, in Faith---Hope, and Charity: But----let the head be cool; let not the extravagant and impious brain presume to set bounds to the mercy of GOD; or foolishly point out any one particular sect as the SOLE favourite---the elect of Heaven; nor presumptuously and uncharitably deal out damnation, and arrogate to itself the thunders of the Almighty! In thy house, O GOD! we are taught, there are many mansions! Let me be in thy hands, O my GOD, and not in the hands of men! to those that are in the right way, afford thy grace that they may continue stedfastly therein forever-----! afford it to them who are wandering in error, that they may soon join those who worship thee, in deep humility, according to thy holy ordinance-----! illumine those who are in darkness, and finally conduct us ALL into thy blessed kingdom-----O our father-----through CHRIST our LORD!

THIS is the prayer of a christian, of a man who reads the Gospel with temperance and modesty, and makes his Saviour his pattern, following him with an honest and a sober zeal----, with sure-----though very unequal steps----, and little regarding

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the madneſs of the canting enthuſiaſt, who explains that Goſpel as it appears to his diſordered head----; little regarding him, I ſay, or even an Angel from Heaven, if he ſhould dare to preach any other doctrine than what our meek, and charitable Saviour has left the world as a legacy invaluable.

The primitive chriſtians, had not only the ſame enemies to ſtruggle and contend with, that at preſent demand our vigilance, the world, the fleſh, and the Devil; but the additional ones, alſo, of hot-headed ſuperſtitious Pagans, and intemperate, bigoted Jews, who in order to cruſh, ſtifle and eradicate in its firſt growth a religion ſo repugnant to their practices, crucified the Lord and Maſter, and treated his followers and diſciples with correſpondent cruelty. And truſt me (as death is only formidable to the wicked) were the ſame means purſued in theſe our days; there are many Clergymen, and I hope Laymen too, who would joyfully brave the utmoſt terrors of the ſtake-----, who now, in conſequence of it's removal, lead a life of chearfulneſs, compatible with their hopes of a glorious immortality.

They

They err, therefore, who preach up the ſame mortification at theſe times, which in thoſe of the Apoſtles was ſo neceſſary: from hence are all the texts enforced by the Church of *Rome*, by which ſhe enjoins celibacy and ſequeſtered melancholy to her deluded votaries, as highly eſſential to thoſe ſhe allots the chiefeſt place in Heaven------, to her popes, her prieſts, her cardinals, her friars, nuns and jeſuits.

Hence, likewiſe, are ſome gloomy proteſtants induced vainly to imagine, that buckram is moſt ſuitable for a wedding garment.----------Fools-------! though the way is narrow, and the gate ſtrait, yet it is no where written that the path to eternal Glory is ſtrewed with thorns. The ways of vice are broad, and apparently delicious-----, but it is they which are ſtrewed with thorns, and none but ſhallow travellers can be deceived with the thin ſhade of roſes which overſpread their points. Religion, Madam, like virtue its companion, carries its own reward along with it, her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

Nor is a weak brother now entitled to that regard, which in the firſt planting of the Goſpel was perhaps as much a laudable policy, as his right. Great care was neceſſary at thoſe early times, in order to eſtabliſh the doctrine of our Lord while expoſed to the hotteſt perſecution: and as the relapſe of *one*, might be attended with dangerous conſequences to the infant Church------ſo the wiſe Paſtors of it, properly ordained that great conſideration and allowances ſhould be made to the weak, and flimſy conſciences of their brethren. Such puny children had tender ſtomachs which could digeſt no other nouriſhment than milk, but in ſeventeen hundred years it is their *own fault* if they have not acquired ſtrength to endure a ſtronger diet. For now, when the ſword and faggot are no more; when toleration, in theſe happy climates, extends her arms, and peace and religion flouriſh under her protection; while the Goſpel is explained in the moſt faithful manner, by wiſe, moderate, and judicious men; while ſuperſtition and bigotry, together with mad enthuſiaſm, on the contrary oppoſe ſuch honeſt endeavours; let the Church aſſume to itſelf its proper dignity, and with autho-

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rity pronounce that is innocent and compatible with a life of virtue, in defiance of ignorance and error.

Let her loudly proclaim, that after we have performed our reſpective parts upon the ſtage of life, of godly men, dutiful children, affectionate parents, faithful friends, firm patriots, and kind indulgent huſbands, we may, through the merits of our Saviour, cloſe the ſcene with ſafety to ourſelves, and honour to our friends.

In conſequence then of a virtuous life, and with a comparative contempt of this world, when oppoſed to the *next*, (on *which* the Chriſtian is ever ſuppoſed to have his eye) I do, and will maintain it, that none but the good man has a right to enjoy the things of this world,-----and that none but ſuch can enjoy it with a proper *goût* and reliſh.

There are evils enough, and misfortunes incident to mortality, without our carving out artificial ones, or depriving ourſelves or others, through narrow, illiberal principles and paltry and contracted ideas, of innocent amuſements.

You

You will obſerve, Madam, that I have not offered *one objection* to the *exceptions* that policy may take againſt the Stage. In truth, I cannot comprehend them; as it is plain that the Theatre brings many ſtrangers to a city, and in conſequence of that, additional riches; and generally ſpends within its limits all its gains. But this is foreign to my purpoſe, and will no doubt be amply diſcuſſed by others whom it more immediately concerns.

I HAVE the honour of being with the higheſt reſpect,

MADAM,

Your moſt devoted,------and

Moſt obedient humble Servant,

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